Sustainable Communities Strategy Regional Land Use Model Update

Community Design Model

Client: County of San Luis Obispo
General Location: San Luis Obispo, CA

Placeways created a Community Design Model as a San Luis Obispo County-specific application that analyzes and illustrates the effects of Strategic Growth principles in community plans. The model was built in two related parts. The first part was designed for use at the county level and the second part was designed for use in individual communities (10 urban areas, 16 villages, and rural areas). The county-level model covered the entire county, though major cities were treated as single, simplified polygons with aggregated attributes. It included all the zoning designations used in the county (about 20). The community-level model was built on the county-level one, but it added additional capabilities for modeling community-level planning strategies such as infill development, and it added community-specific indicators. Placeways also trained staff to reapply the community-level model to other communities in the county. Its formulas and models drew from the Complete Communities Survey, Placeways' own experience, and sources recommended by County staff, and it also integrated with or drew from external models such as development pro formas, EnergyWise, and SLOCOG tools. Placeways worked with the County to develop a prioritized list of measurements—called "indicators."

Next, Placeways built three scenarios at the county level: Base Case, Strategic Growth, and Greenhouse Gas Reduction. Users of the Community Design Model were able to see and compare these scenarios in many forms, including side-by-side maps, indicator charts, and tables. In addition, they were able to interact with the models and displays in many useful ways provided by the CommunityViz platform. In future applications, County staff will have relatively easy ways to create similar scenarios for other communities. Once the scenarios were created, the Community Design Model automatically assessed and illustrated them in the same way.